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Sugiyama et al.

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(54) **GAME OF CHANCE METHOD AND APPARATUS**

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(22) Filed: **Oct. 17, 2000**

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(52) **U.S. Cl.** ..... **273/142 R**; 273/138; 273/143; 463/20; 463/46
(58) **Field of Search** ..... 273/142 R, 292, 273/143, 138.2; 463/20, 46

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Assistant Examiner—D. Collins
(74) *Attorney, Agent, or Firm*—Phillip J. Anderson; Anderson & Morishita, LLC

(57) **ABSTRACT**

Disclosed herein is an apparatus and method for playing a game of chance. The game of chance includes a multi-reel slot game and one or more matrices. In one embodiment, one matrix per payline configuration is made available. When a special symbol appears on a reel it is activated on the corresponding matrix in a corresponding cell of the matrix. When the special symbols align in the matrix according to the payline in question, a winning outcome occurs. In another embodiment, a plurality of special symbols are available on said reels. One matrix per special symbol is provided. When special symbols appear on the reel selected paylines they are activated in like cell positions on the appropriate matrix. When the a matrix is filled a winning outcome occurs and the player may qualify for an eligibility game that may provide additional awards to a player.

4 Claims, 14 Drawing Sheets

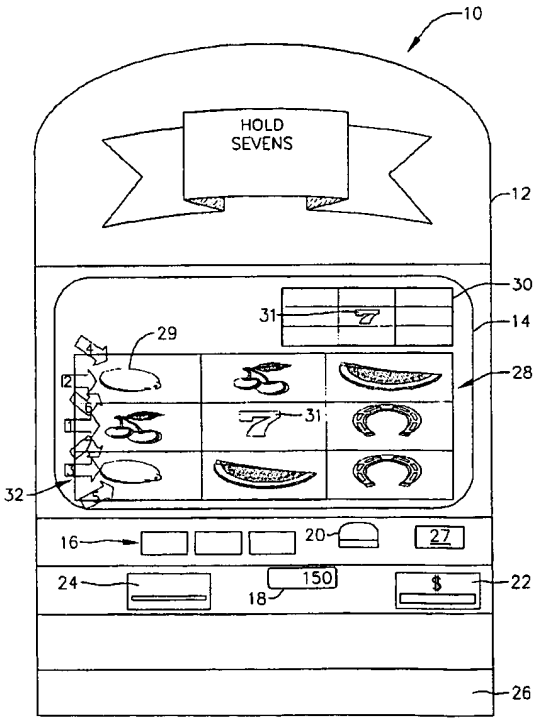
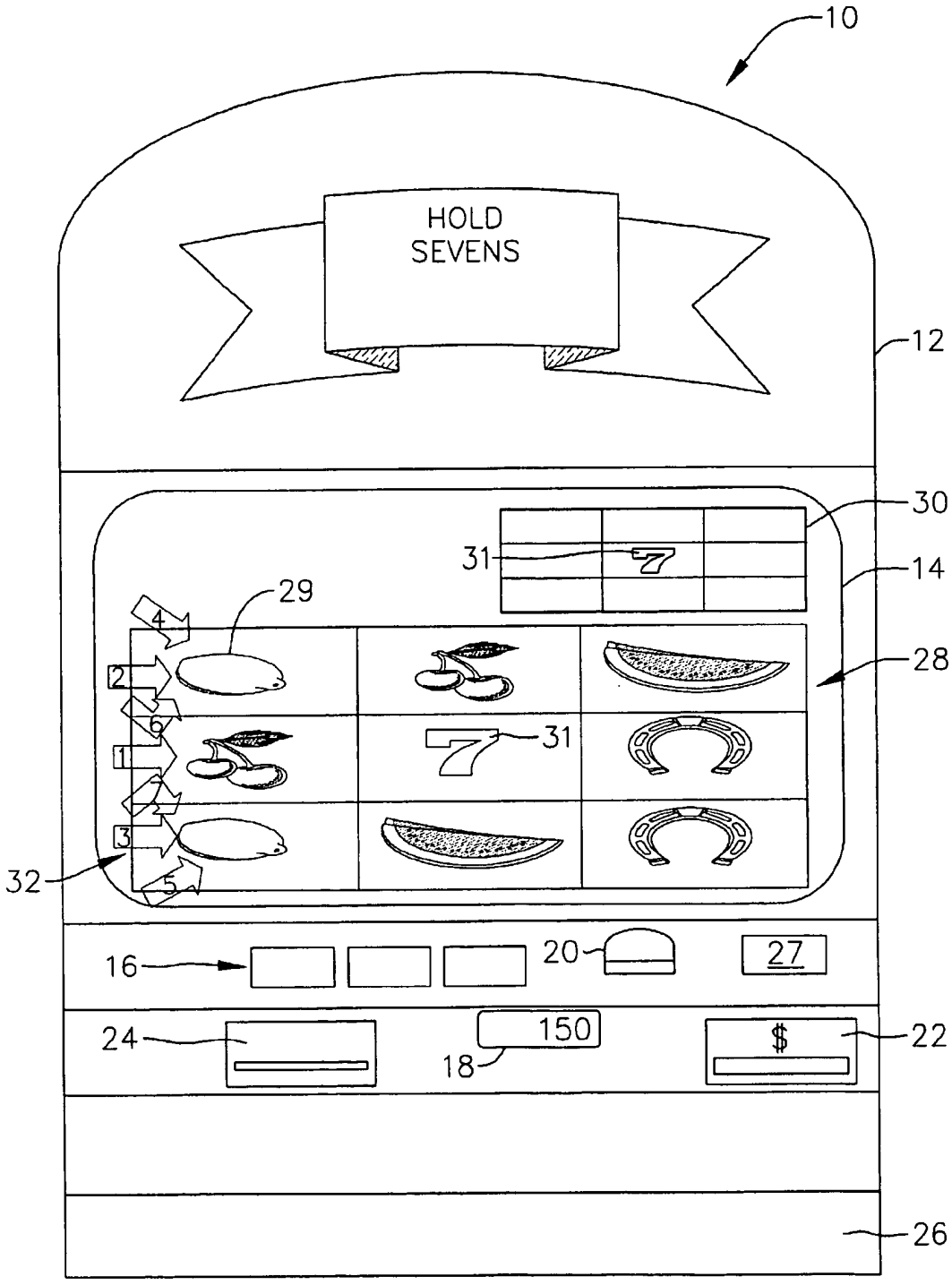


FIG. 1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HOLD
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31
7
14
29
4
2
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5
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32
16
20
27
24
150
18
$
22
26

FIG. 2

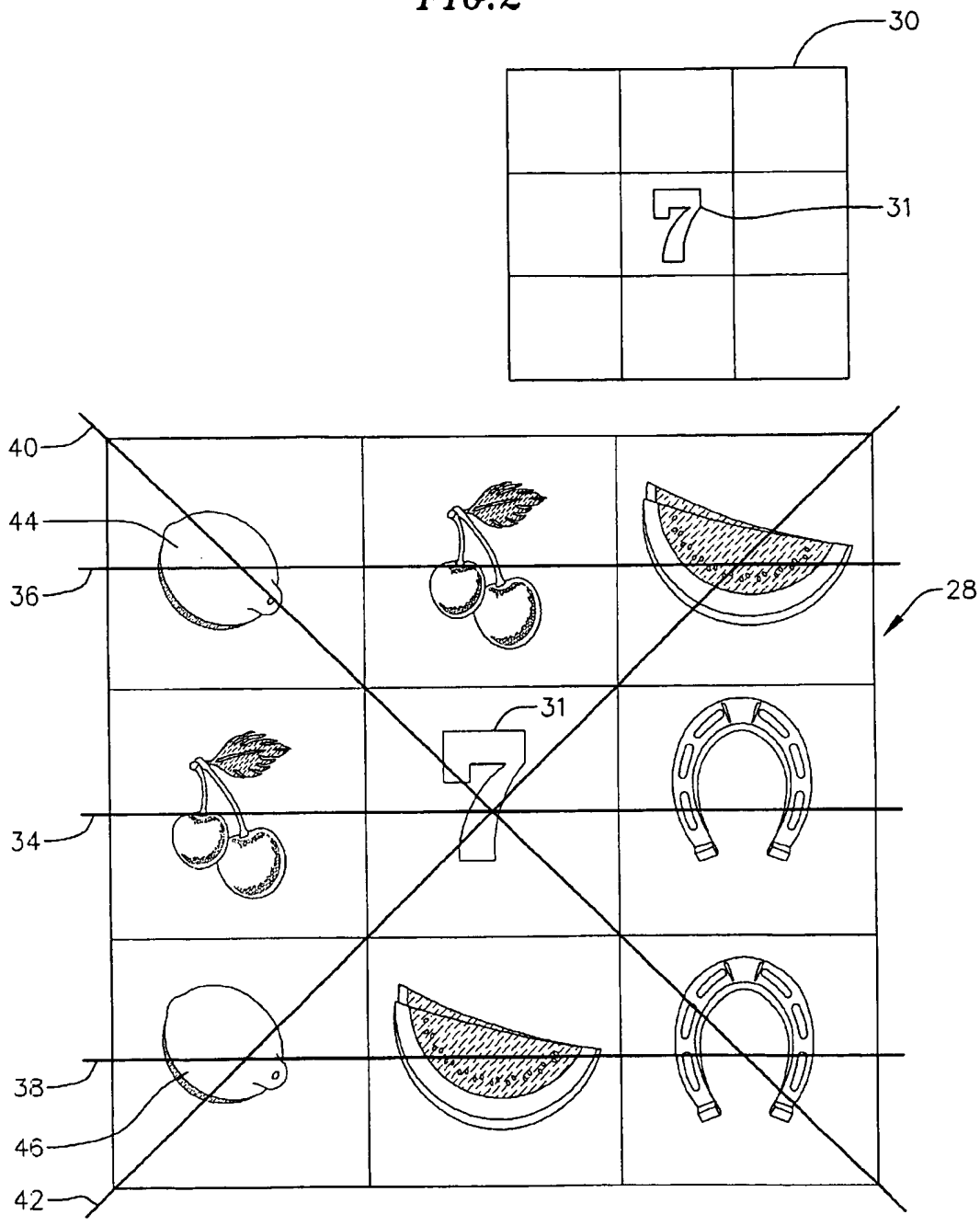


FIG. 3A

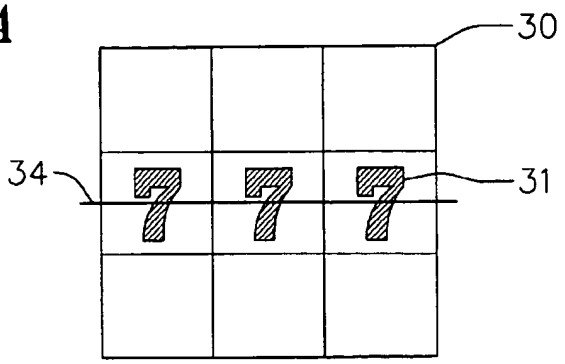


FIG. 3B

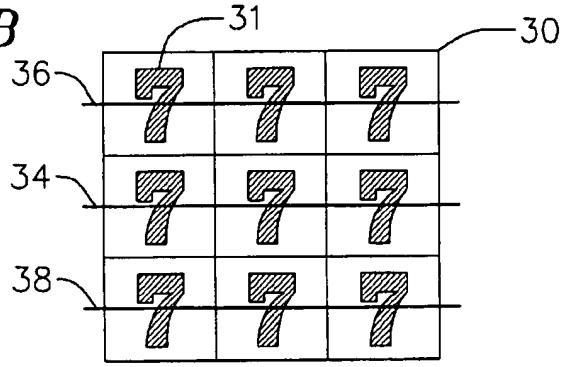


FIG. 3C

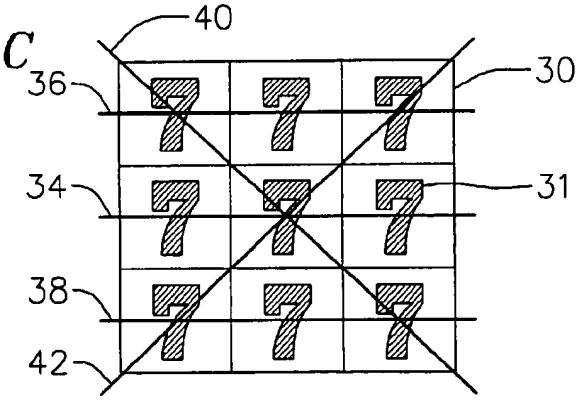


FIG. 3D

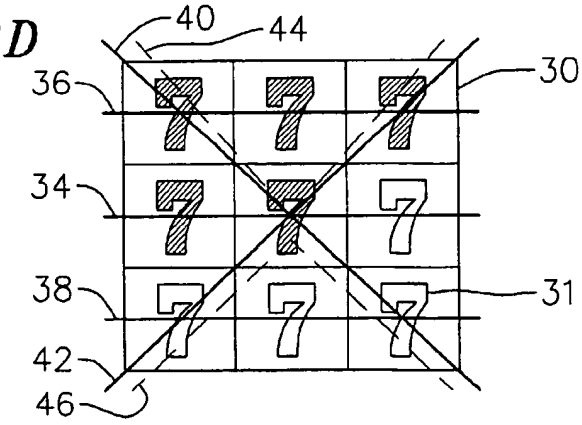
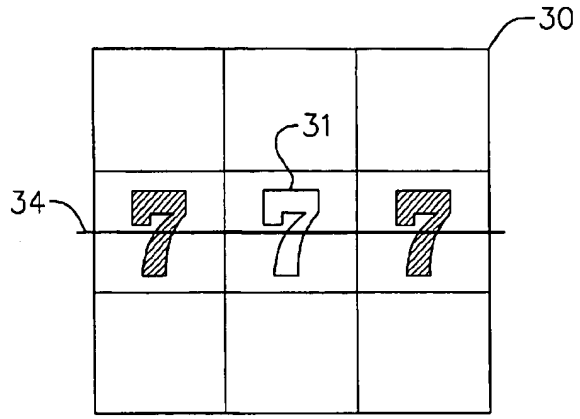


FIG. 4A



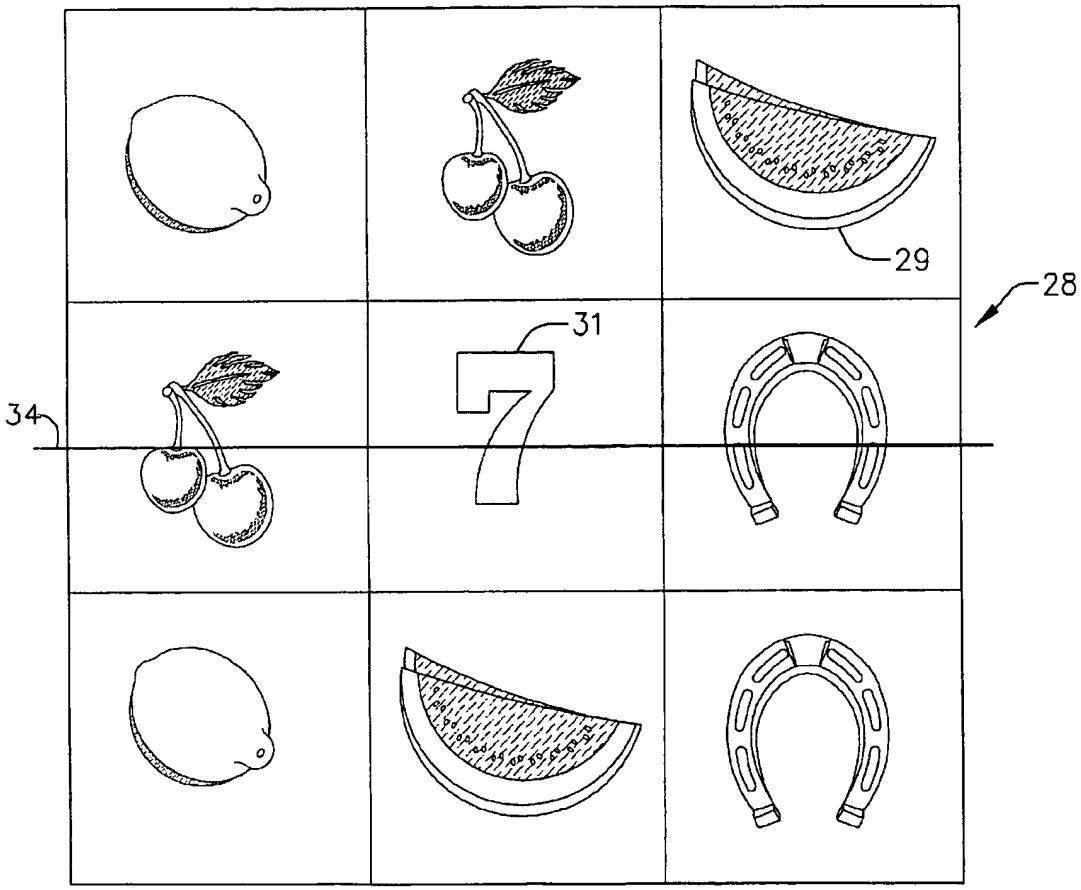


FIG.4B

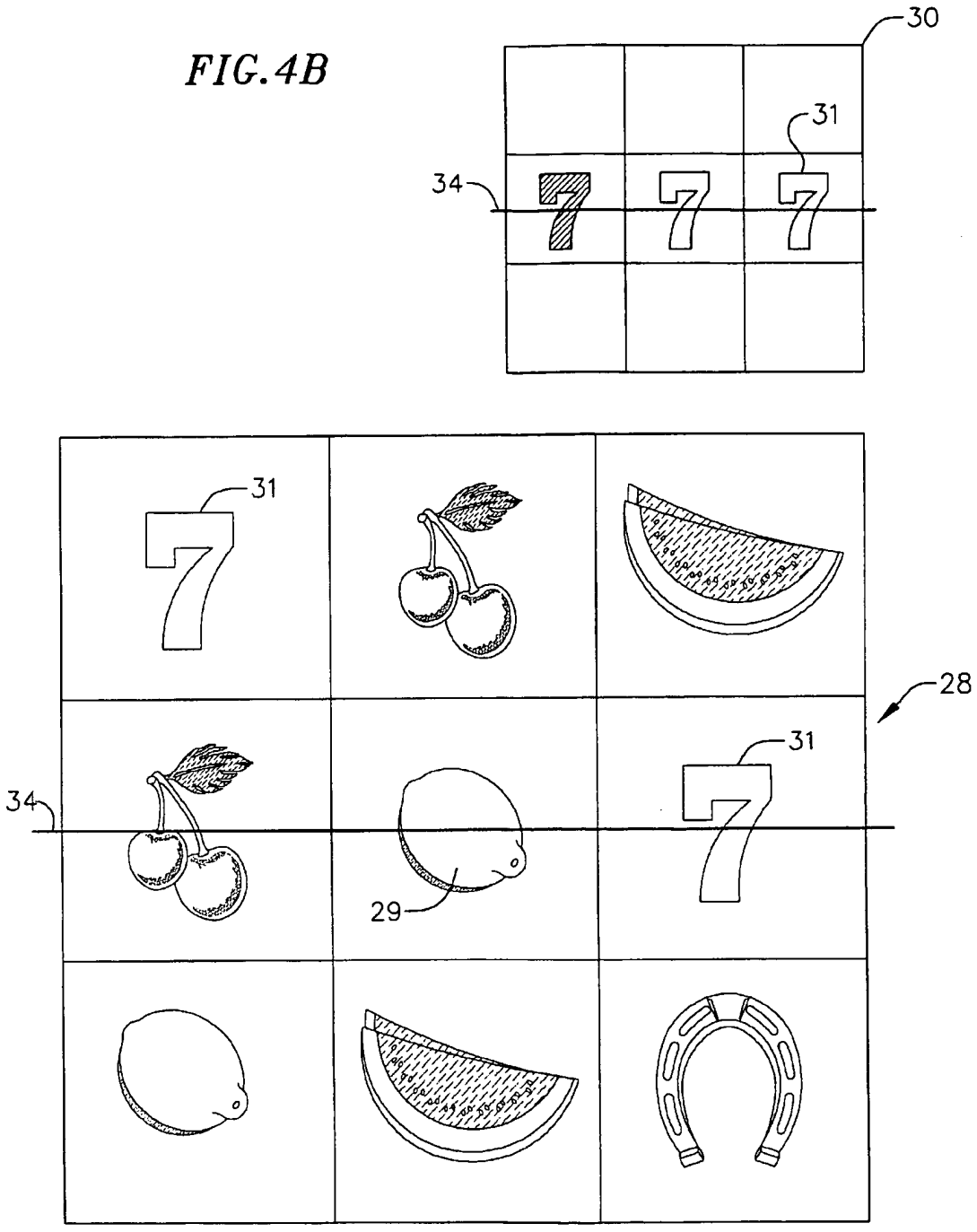


FIG. 5A

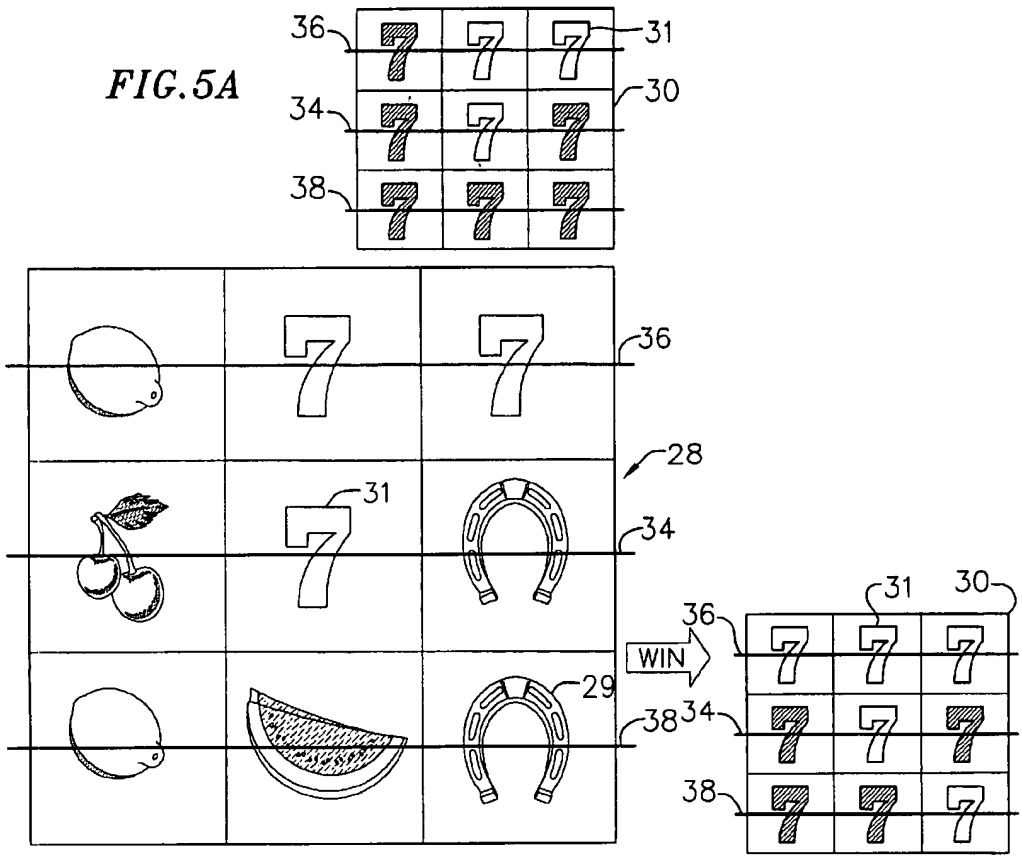


FIG. 5B

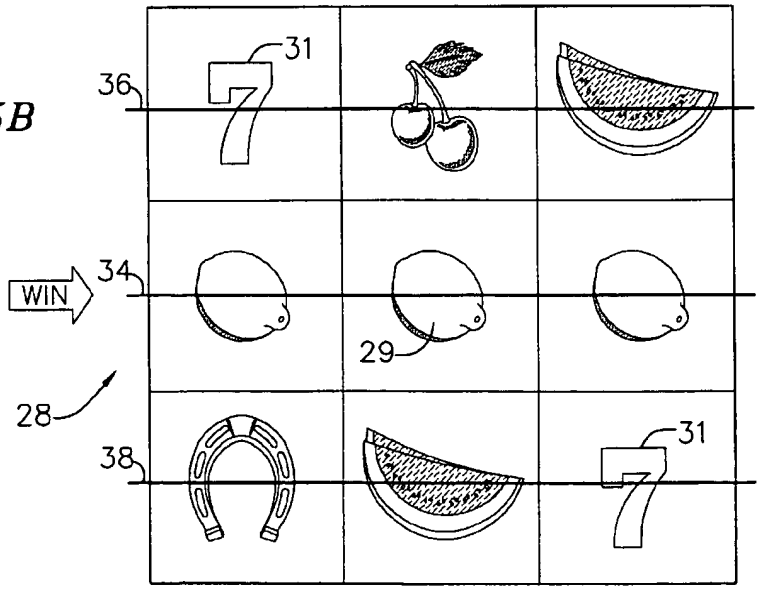


FIG. 6A

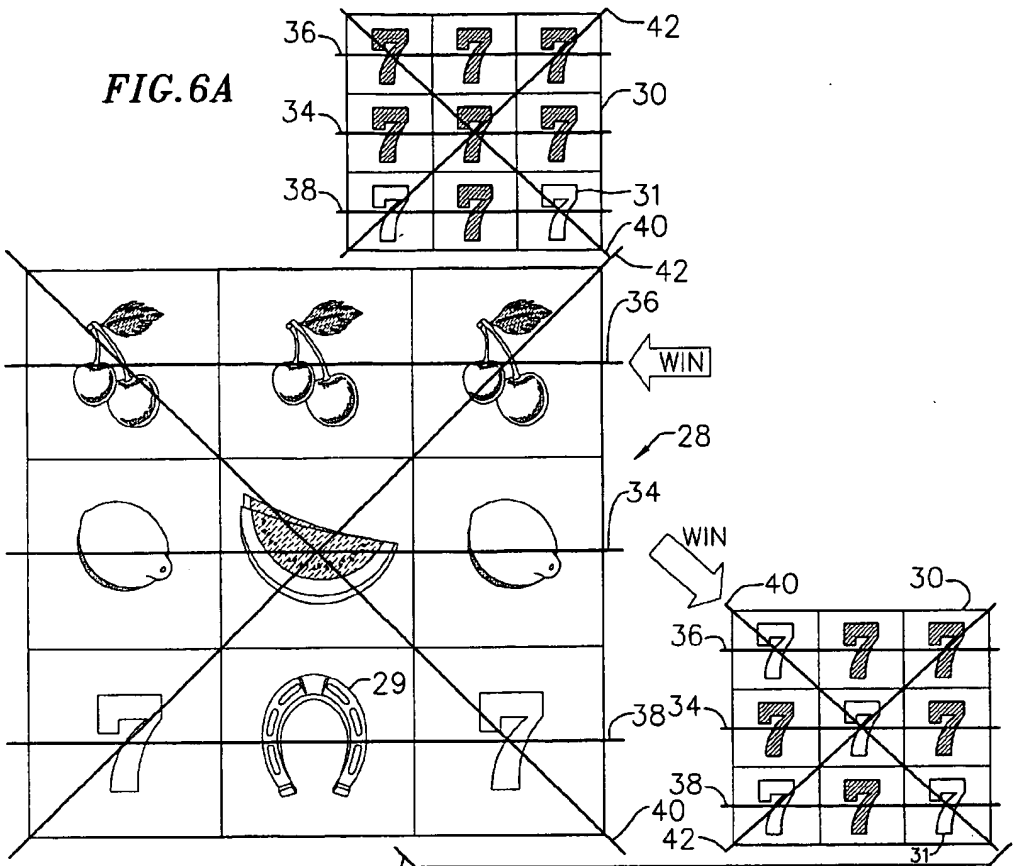

36
42
34
30
38
31
40
42
36
WIN
28
34
WIN
40
30
36
29
38
34
38
40
42
31

FIG. 6B

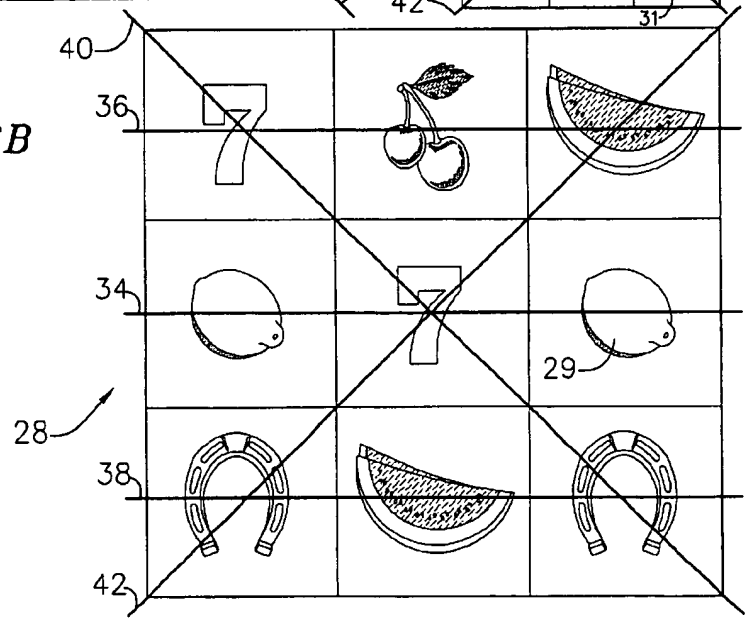

40
36
34
29
28
38
42

FIG. 7A

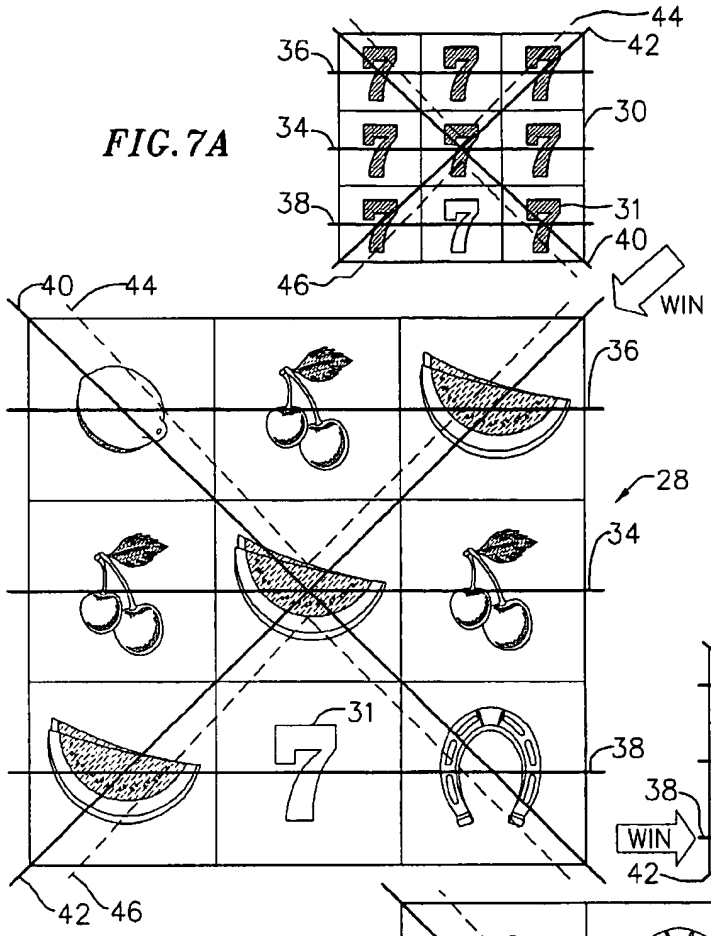

44
42
36
30
34
38
31
40
46
WIN
40
44
36
28
34
31
38
42
46

FIG. 7B

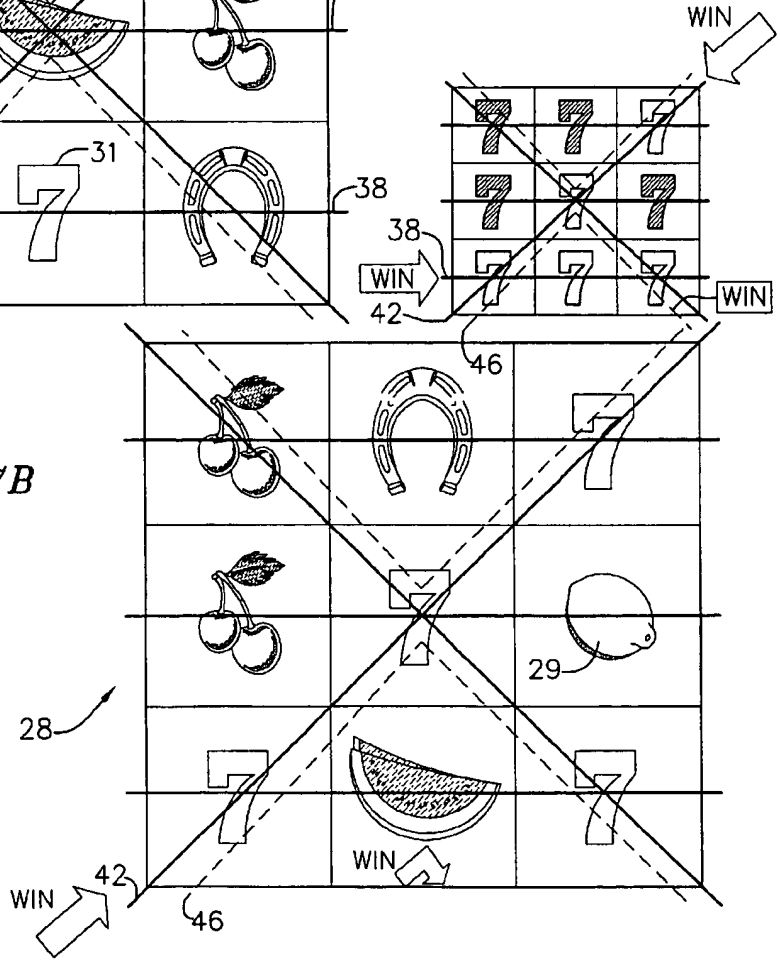

WIN
38
WIN
WIN
42
46
29
28
WIN
42
WIN
46

FIG.8

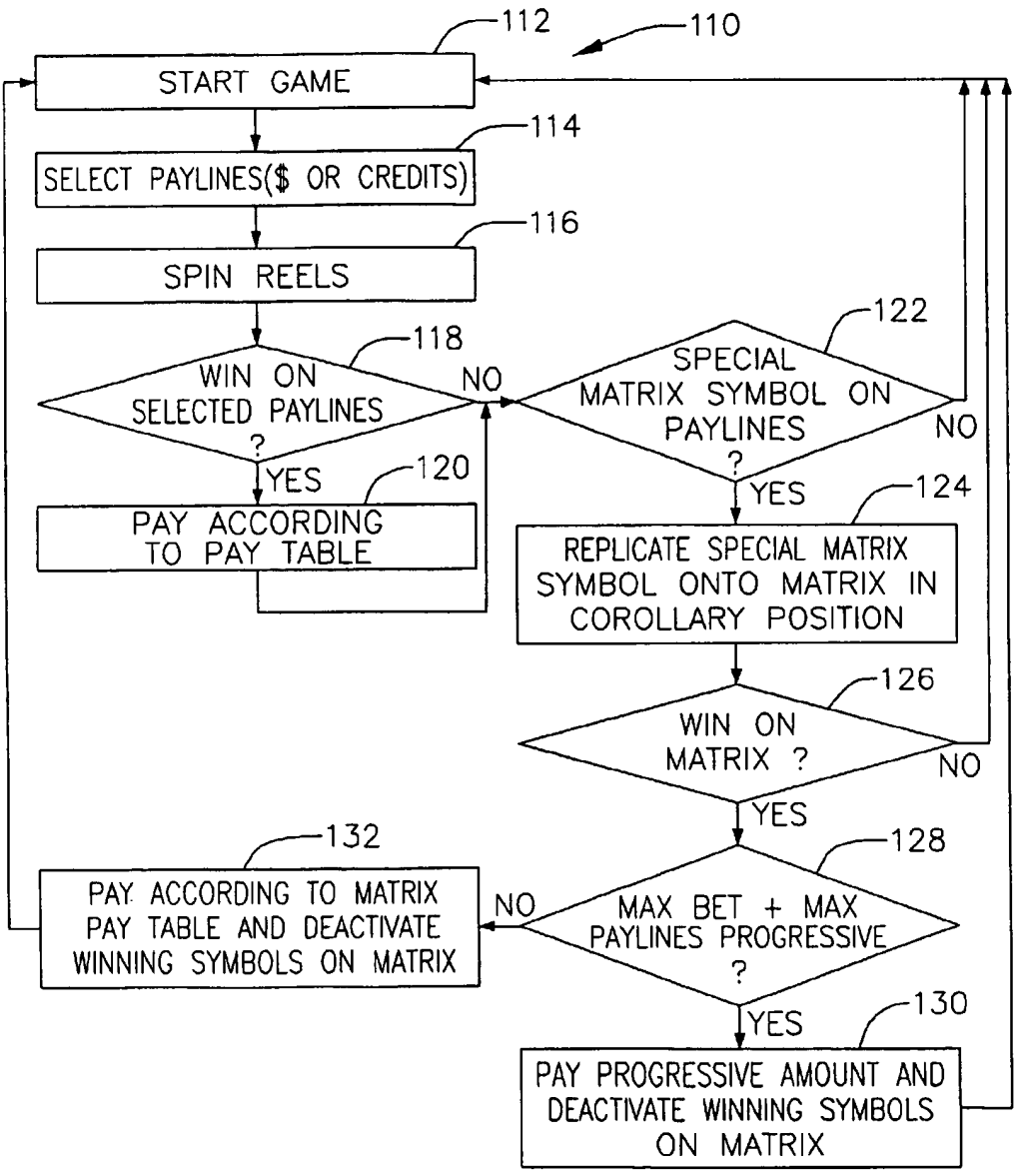
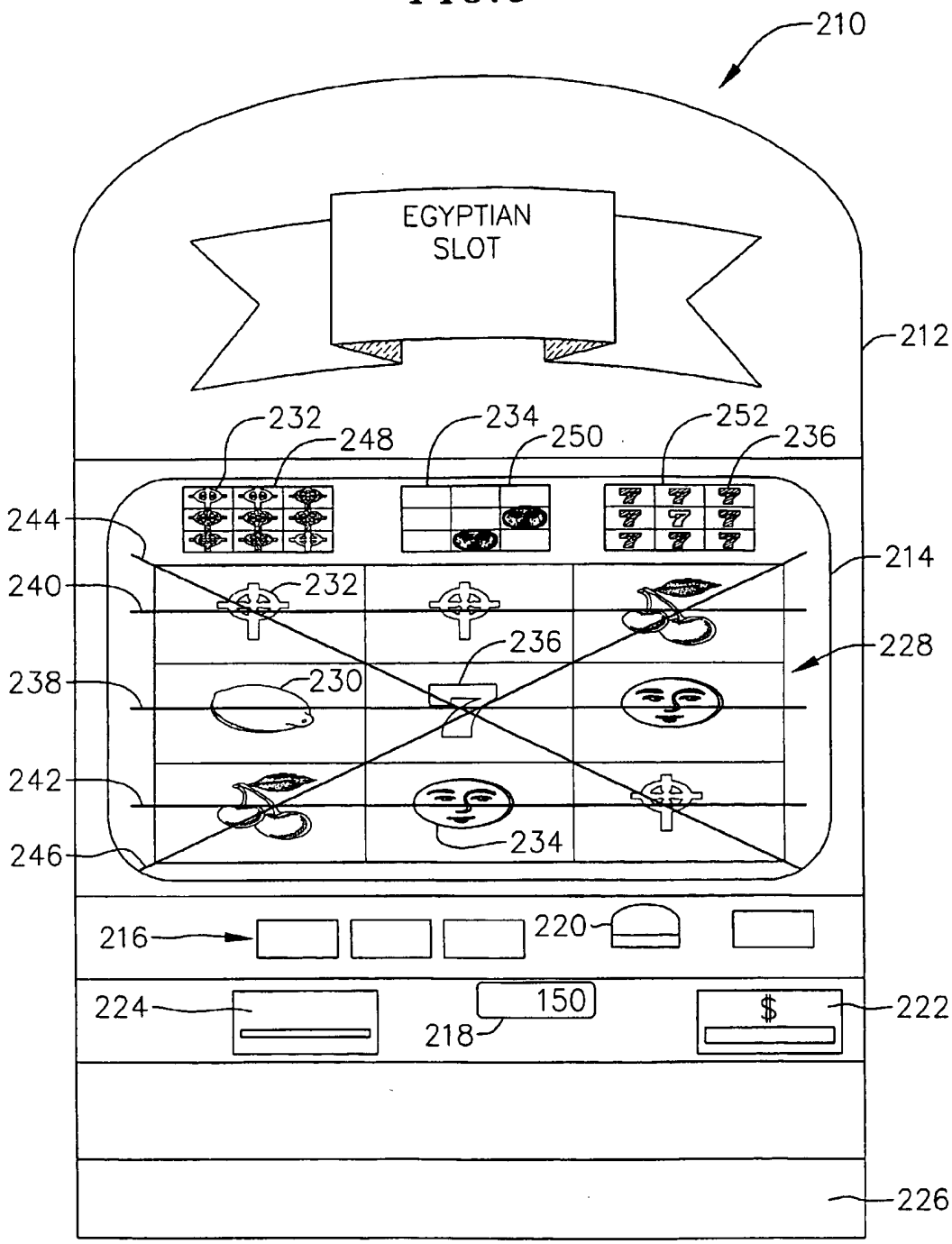

112
110
START GAME
114
SELECT PAYLINES($ OR CREDITS)
116
SPIN REELS
118
WIN ON SELECTED PAYLINES ?
NO
YES
120
PAY ACCORDING TO PAY TABLE
122
SPECIAL MATRIX SYMBOL ON PAYLINES ?
NO
YES
124
REPLICATE SPECIAL MATRIX SYMBOL ONTO MATRIX IN COROLLARY POSITION
126
WIN ON MATRIX ?
NO
YES
128
MAX BET + MAX PAYLINES PROGRESSIVE ?
NO
YES
130
PAY PROGRESSIVE AMOUNT AND DEACTIVATE WINNING SYMBOLS ON MATRIX
132
PAY ACCORDING TO MATRIX PAY TABLE AND DEACTIVATE WINNING SYMBOLS ON MATRIX

FIG. 9


210
EGYPTIAN SLOT
212
232
248
234
250
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214
228
238
230
242
246
216
220
224
150
218
$
222
226

FIG. 10

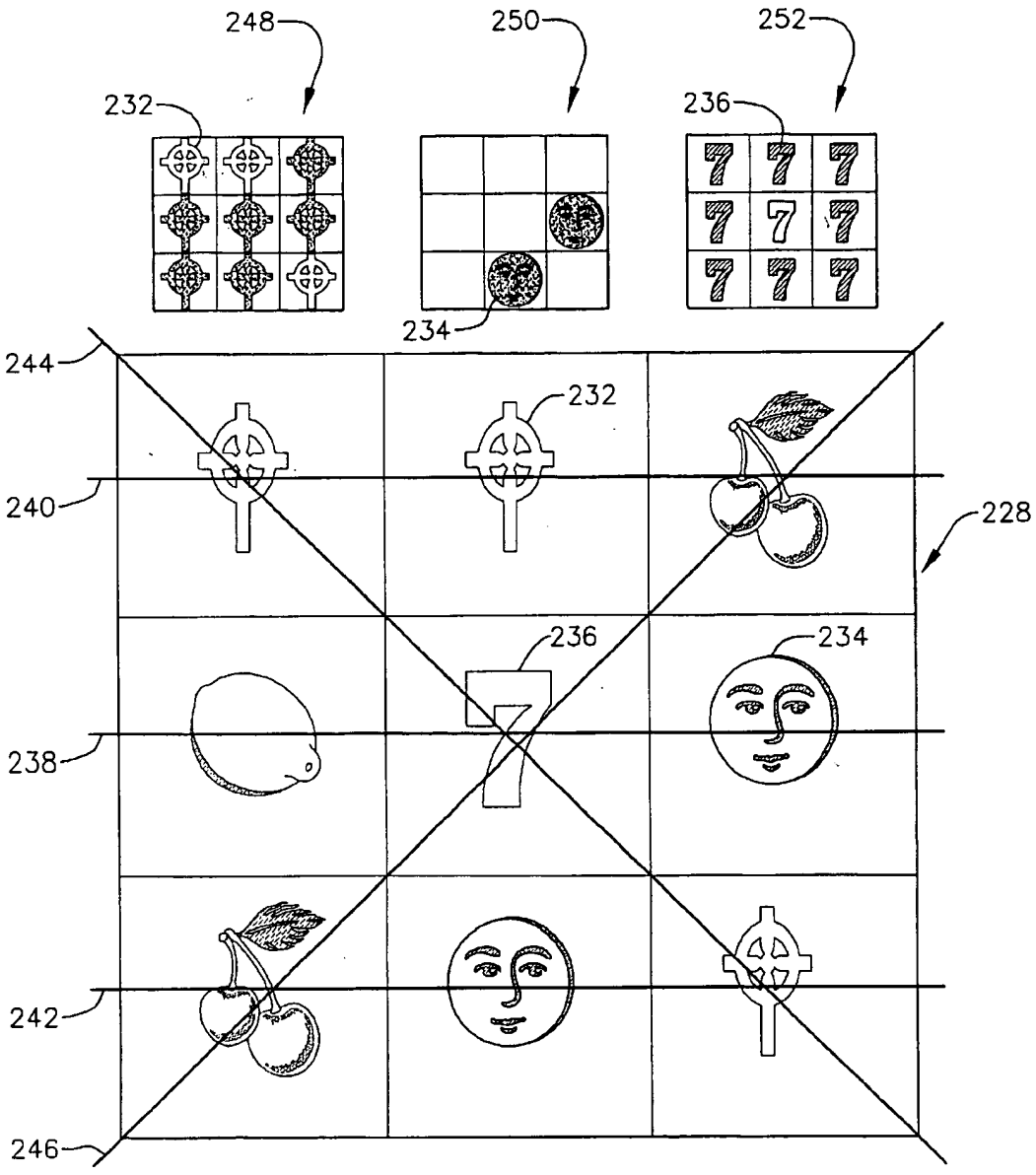


FIG. 11

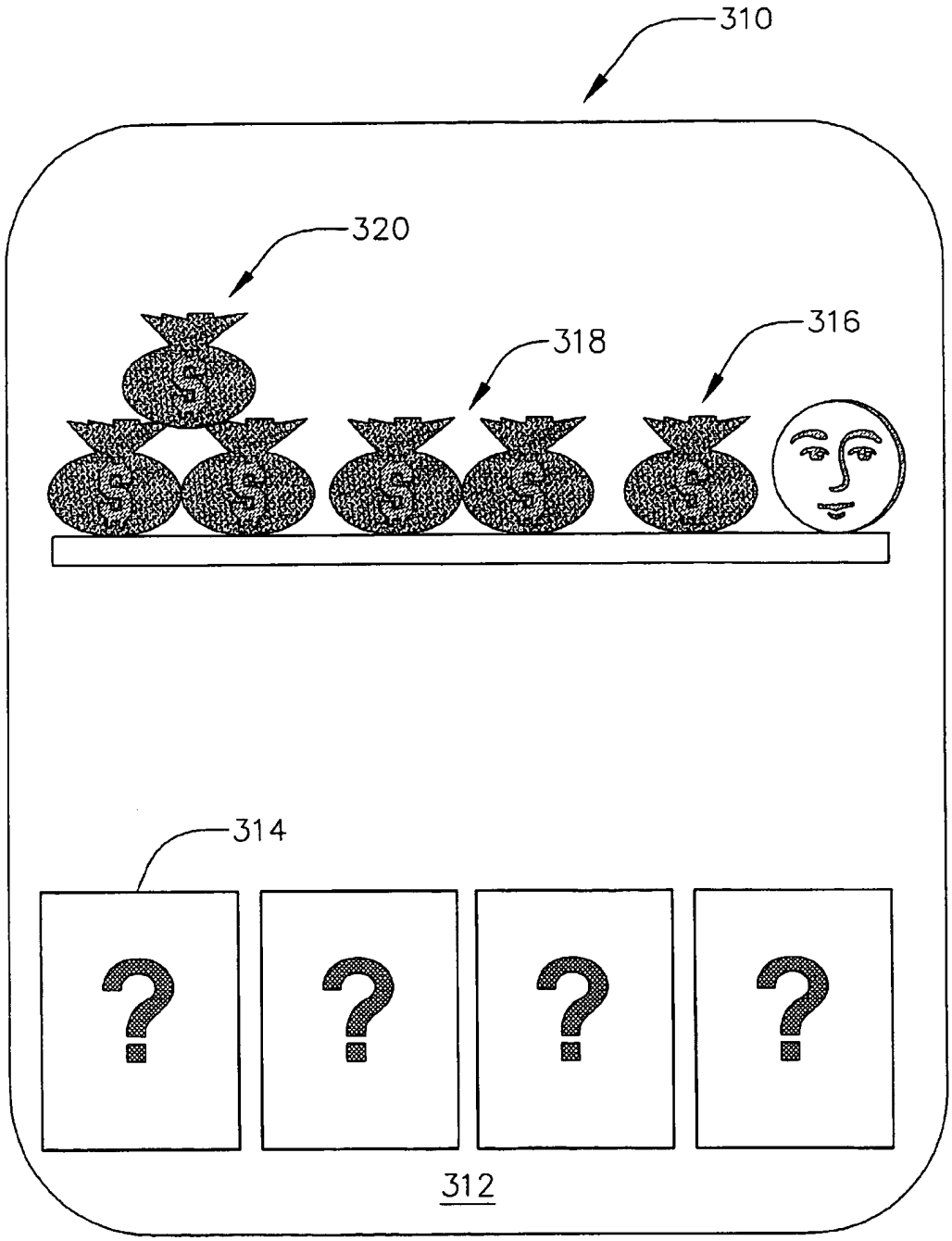


FIG. 12

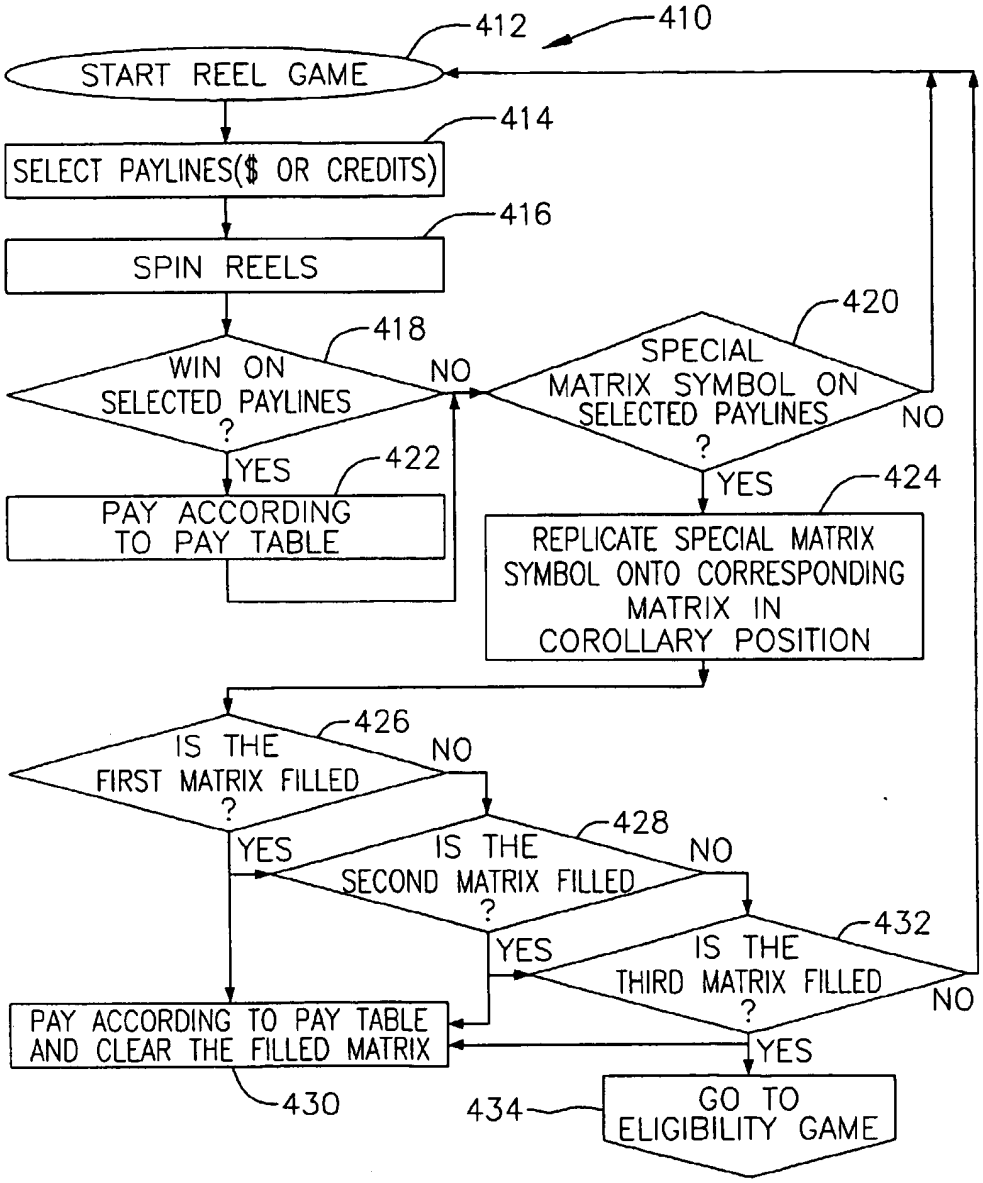
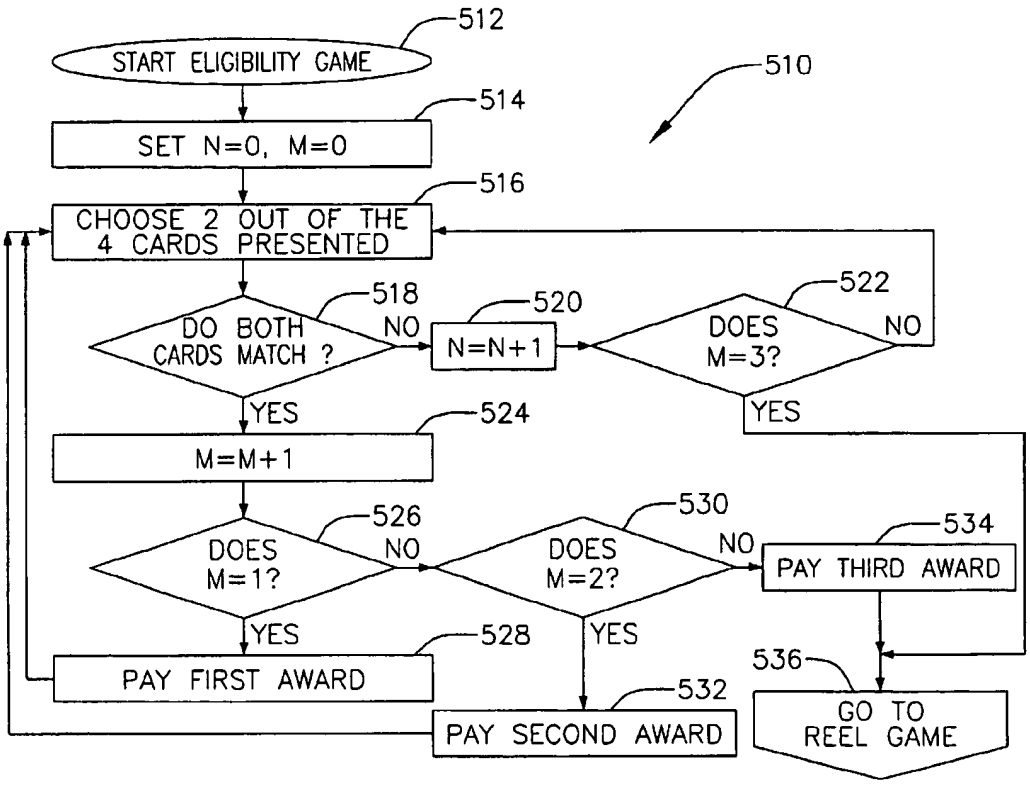

410
412
START REEL GAME
414
SELECT PAYLINES($ OR CREDITS)
416
SPIN REELS
418
WIN ON SELECTED PAYLINES ?
NO
YES
420
SPECIAL MATRIX SYMBOL ON SELECTED PAYLINES ?
NO
YES
422
PAY ACCORDING TO PAY TABLE
424
REPLICATE SPECIAL MATRIX SYMBOL ONTO CORRESPONDING MATRIX IN COROLLARY POSITION
426
IS THE FIRST MATRIX FILLED ?
NO
YES
428
IS THE SECOND MATRIX FILLED ?
NO
YES
432
IS THE THIRD MATRIX FILLED ?
NO
YES
PAY ACCORDING TO PAY TABLE AND CLEAR THE FILLED MATRIX
430
434
GO TO ELIGIBILITY GAME

FIG. 13


512
START ELIGIBILITY GAME
510
514
SET N=0, M=0
516
CHOOSE 2 OUT OF THE 4 CARDS PRESENTED
518
DO BOTH CARDS MATCH ?
NO
520
N=N+1
522
DOES M=3?
NO
YES
YES
524
M=M+1
526
DOES M=1?
NO
530
DOES M=2?
NO
534
PAY THIRD AWARD
YES
528
YES
536
PAY FIRST AWARD
532
PAY SECOND AWARD
GO TO REEL GAME

GAME OF CHANCE METHOD AND APPARATUS

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of the Invention

The present invention relates generally to games of chance. More particularly, the present invention relates to an apparatus and method for games of chance of the slot variety.

2. The Prior Art

Various games of chance have been promoted throughout the years with varying degrees of success. One particularly popular game of chance is the slot machine type game. Generally speaking, slot machines include at least three reels, either mechanically operated or depicted on a video screen. Upon activation, the reels spin and stop in a random manner. Symbols depicted on the reels, when arranged according to a pay table, can result in a winning event and a player may receive credits or monetary awards.

Many have attempted to provide greater excitement to the traditional slot game by various means. For instance, slot games had been grouped together on networks to form progressive pools so that greater jackpots could be achieved. Additionally, adding more and more paylines to traditional slot games has been tried with some success in certain jurisdictions to provide greater player entertainment. Further, certain bonus games dependent on the primary reel game have been touted with both limited and greater success. However, such bonus games are typically confusing and complicated for the player.

A continuing need exists to provide ever more exciting slot games that are both simple for the player to understand and exciting for the player to play.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

To overcome these and other shortcomings of the prior art, disclosed herein is an apparatus and method for playing a slot game which includes a matrix game that is triggered by the slot game. More particularly, the present invention depicts a reel slot game and a matrix, wherein the elements of the matrix are made active by results on the reels. When the elements of the matrix combine according to a pay table, one or more awards may be credited or paid to a player in addition to awards determined according to reel stop positions.

It is therefore an object of the present invention to provide a more entertaining slot game than known heretofore.

It is another object of the present invention to provide a slot game which pays according to a pay table based on reel symbol positions, and also activates special symbols on a display matrix when those special symbols appear on selected paylines on the reels.

It is another object of the present invention to award players according to a pay table when activated special symbols align in a predetermined manner.

It is yet another object of the present invention to provide a reel slot game and a plurality of matrices, each of which may include activated special symbols when those symbols appear on the reels.

It is also an object of the present invention to provide a reel slot game and a plurality of matrices where when special symbols are aligned and activated in a predetermined manner makes eligible play of another game which may provide additional awards.

Viewed from a first vantage point a method for playing a game of chance is disclosed comprising presenting a plurality of reels on a display, the reels including a plurality of symbols depicted thereon; providing at least one payline on the reels; presenting at least one matrix, the matrix including a plurality of cells corresponding to stop positions on the reels; spinning the reels and stopping the spinning reels; determining whether a winning outcome has occurred according to the stopped reel symbol positions as compared to one or more predefined winning outcomes; activating a special symbol in each cell of the at least one matrix in a cell position corresponding to the special symbol location on the reels when a special symbol. appears on the at least one reel payline; determining whether a winning outcome has occurred according to the location of the activated special symbols on the at least one matrix; and notifying the player of a win in the event at least one winning outcome has been determined.

Viewed from another vantage point a program storage device readable by a machine, tangibly embodying a program of instructions executable by the machine to perform a method for playing a game of chance is disclosed, the method comprising in combination presenting a plurality of reels on a display, the reels including a plurality of symbols depicted thereon; providing at least one payline on the reels; presenting at least one matrix on the display, the matrix including a plurality of cells corresponding to stop positions on the reels; spinning the reels and stopping the spinning reels; determining whether a winning outcome has occurred according to the stopped reel symbol positions as compared to one or more predefined winning outcomes; activating a special symbol in each cell of the at least one matrix in a cell position corresponding to the special symbol location on the reels when a special symbol appears on the at least one reel payline; determining whether a winning outcome has occurred according to the location of the activated special symbols on the at least one matrix; and notifying the player of a win in the event at least one winning outcome has been determined.

Viewed from yet another vantage point a game of chance configured as a slot type game is disclosed comprising in combination a plurality of reels including a plurality of symbols displayable on the reels and at least one payline associated with the reels; at least one matrix configured to display special symbols on the matrix when teh special symbols appear on the reels; a reel spinning means for spinning the reels and stopping the spinning; an outcome determination means for determining the outcome of the game based on comparing a predefined winning outcome schedule with the stopped reel symbol locations and comparing the special symbol locations with the predefined winning outcome schedule; and notification means for notifying a player of a winning outcome.

These and other objects of the present invention will become manifest from the further descriptions and claims of the invention provided herein.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWING FIGURES

FIG. 1 is a front view drawing of a game machine of the present invention.

FIG. 2 is a diagram of the reels and matrix depicted in FIG. 1.

FIG. 3A is a drawing of a 3×3 matrix for a one-line game of the present invention.

FIG. 3B is a drawing of a 3×3 matrix for a three-line game of the present invention.

FIG. 3C is a drawing of a 3×3 matrix for a five-line game of the present invention.

FIG. 3D is a drawing of a 3×3 matrix for a seven-line game of the present invention.

FIG. 4A is a drawing depicting an example of a one-line game in a first state of the present invention.

FIG. 4B is a drawing depicting an example of a one-line game in a second state of the present invention.

FIG. 5A is a drawing depicting an example of a three-line game in a first state of the present invention.

FIG. 5B is a drawing depicting an example of a three-line game in a second state of the present invention.

FIG. 6A is a drawing depicting an example of a five-line game in a first state of the present invention.

FIG. 6B is a drawing depicting. an example of a five-line game in a second state of the present invention.

FIG. 7A is a drawing depicting an example of a seven-line game in a first state of the present invention.

FIG. 7B is a drawing depicting an example of a seven-line game in a second state of the present invention.

FIG. **8** is a flowchart of the method of the present invention.

FIG. **9** is a front view of an alternate embodiment of a gaming machine of the present invention.

FIG. **10** is a drawing of the reels and matrices shown in the display of FIG. **9**.

FIG. **11** is a drawing of a display of the eligibility game of the of the alternate embodiment of the present invention.

FIG. **12** is a flowchart of the method of the alternate embodiment prior to entering the eligibility game of the present invention.

FIG. **13** is a flowchart of the method of the eligibility game of the alternate embodiment of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

Persons of ordinary skill in the art will realize that the following description of the present invention is illustrative only and not in any way limiting. Other embodiments of the invention will readily suggest themselves to such skilled persons having the benefit of this disclosure.

Referring now to the drawing figures wherein like reference numerals depict like parts throughout the various drawing figures, FIG. **1** depicts an overview of a slot machine **10**. The game machine **10** includes a game cabinet **12**. In this drawing figure the game cabinet **12** is depicted as an "upright" game machine. However, various game cabinets could be utilized without departing from the scope of the present invention. For instance, the game cabinet **12** could just as well be configured as a "slant-top" game cabinet wherein part of the cabinet is slanted upwardly so that a player sitting will view that section of the cabinet including the video display **14** while looking in a downward direction.

A hole in the game cabinet **12** is configured to accommodate a video display **14**. Various video displays **14** could be utilized without departing from the scope of this invention. Size variations for video displays in the industry range from 13" to 19" or greater video displays and they may or may not include a "touchscreen" capability. Any such video display capable of depicting the reel and matrix arrangement to be described hereinafter is contemplated by this invention.

Furthermore, a video display **14** may not be utilized at all when mechanical reels are desired. In such a case, as will be appreciated by those skilled in the art, mechanical reels activated by stepper motors that are controlled by software will work as well, but are not preferred. Additionally, as described below, the matrix **30** is preferably a video depiction. However, that matrix can likewise be mechanically driven with stepper motors controlled by software. Thus, this invention, though preferred in the video form, is not intended to be limited to video, but may include any variations which do not depart from the meaning and scope of the described game. In fact, one clear variation of the game would be to present same on the internet or other network or via software on a computer in the absence of any cabinet or like accoutrements. This is clearly contemplated by this invention and would not depart from the scope and meaning of same.

As is common to games of chance configured as slot machines, a credit meter **18** for indicating credits available for play is included on the game cabinet **12** along with a coin slot **20** for receiving coins for play. Additionally, a bill validator **22** for receiving currency instead of coinage is included in the game cabinet **12** along with a card reader **24** for tracking player activity via a player magnetic stripe card. Furthermore, a coin payout bin **26** is included in this preferred embodiment for disbursing winnings to players upon activation of a payout button **27** by a player. Although these described elements are preferred, other game machine variations are contemplated by this invention without departing from the scope of this invention. For instance, instead of the coinage and cash handling means described above, a cashless system may be likewise utilized that incorporates coupons or smartcards instead of cash or coinage. Additionally, other incidental features such as progressive meters, signage, or other display elements are likewise contemplated by the scope of this invention and such variations would not depart from that scope.

More particularly, three reels **28** are depicted on the video display. The reels **28** include symbols **29** thereon. As will be appreciated by those skilled in the art, when symbols **29** align on selected paylines **32** according to a paytable (not shown), an award outcome occurs. Additionally, in this invention, when a special symbol **31** presents itself on a selected payline **32**, that special symbol **31**, in this case a "7", is replicated into matrix **30** at a cell position corresponding to the special symbol **31** position on the reels **28**.

More specifically, and referring now to FIG. **2** which depicts the video display of FIG. **1** in an enlarged drawing, reels **28** have stopped in such a fashion as to present special symbol **31** in the center position of the center reel. That special symbol **31** is thus likewise activated in the center cell of matrix **30** as shown. As will be described in greater detail below, when additional special symbols **31** are replicated into matrix **30** an additional award may occur if aligned according to a paytable (not shown).

Furthermore, as shown in greater detail in FIG. **2** are paylines generally described in FIG. **1** as **32**. As will be appreciated by those skilled in the art, one or more paylines may be activated depending on the number of credits a player wishes to play. For instance, a player may select the first payline **34** by playing one or more credits (many games contemplate more than one credit per payline) and selecting the first payline by touching an appropriate touch field in the event a touch-screen display is utilized, or by pressing the appropriate button **16**. The paylines available for selection in this preferred embodiment are the first payline **34** extending across the center line of the reels **28**, the second payline **36** extending across the top line of the reels **28**, and the third payline **38** extending across the bottom line of the reels **28**.

Additionally, a forth payline **40** extends diagonally from top to bottom of the reels **28**, while a fifth payline **42** extends from bottom to top of the reels **28**. Furthermore, this preferred embodiment includes a sixth payline **44** that extends from the top of the left reel to the center of the center reel and then to the top of the right reel, while a seventh payline **46** extends from the bottom of the left reel to the center of the center reel and then to the bottom of the right reel. Of course, as will be appreciated by those skilled in the art, any variation of paylines may be implemented with this game without departing from the scope of the invention.

Depending on the number of paylines selected, a corresponding matrix **30** is presented. That is, and referring now to FIG. **3**A, when a player elects to play only the first payline on reels **28**, matrix **30** as shown in FIG. **3**A is presented. The special symbols **31** are shown in a grayed-out manner so as to indicate that those positions are yet to be filled in by replicated special symbols **31** from reels **28**. As may be gleaned from FIG. **3**A, when all three special symbols **31** are activated in matrix **30** along the corresponding payline **34** on matrix **30**, a winning outcome occurs and an award is paid or credited by the game. Interestingly, when a player elects to play some other number of paylines other than one, a different matrix is presented to the player corresponding to the appropriate number of paylines as will be explained in more detail below. However, when the player chooses to return to the one line game, the matrix as shown in FIG. **3**A is presented again to the player along with any activated special symbols **31** previously replicated. Thus, the game is capable of retaining in memory multiple matrices **30** along with previously acquired special symbols **31** for each matrix until a winning outcome occurs in a particular matrix resulting in the clearing of the special symbols **31**. It should be noted, however, that when a special symbol **31** is activated in the matrix for the one-line game, it is preferably not activated for the other payline matrices.

Similarly, and referring now to FIG. **3**B, a three-line matrix **30** corresponding to a three-line reel game is shown again with the special symbols **31** grayed out. In this three-line matrix when three special "7" symbols **31** align according to any of the three paylines **34**, **36**, or **38**, a winning outcome occurs resulting in an award. For instance, if all three special "7" symbols become activated after several spins of the reels on payline **36** on matrix **30** of FIG. **3**, an award is credited to the player and the three special symbols reset or are grayed out again. However, any other activated special "7" symbols **31** on that matrix will remain active until a winning outcome occurs causing them to be deactivated or reset. Furthermore, any special "7" symbols activated in the matrix shown in FIG. **3**B are not preferably activated in the matrix of FIG. **3**A or any other matrices.

Likewise, and referring now to FIG. **3**C, a matrix **30** corresponding to a five-line game is shown. The addition of paylines **40** and **42** indicate the forth and fifth paylines for this matrix **30**. Although, similar to the last two described matrices, it is noted again that special symbols **31** activated in this matrix **30** are not preferably activated in the matrices of FIGS. **3**A or **3**B, but are maintained in memory for any future five-line game players.

This is also true for the seven-line matrix **30** depicted in FIG. **3**D. The only difference is the addition of paylines **44** and **46**. Again, this matrix only applies to those players playing all seven lines. Thus, depending on the number of paylines played by a player, different matrices **30** are presented on display **14** along with previously activated special symbols **31** for that particular number of paylines.

By way of example, but not limitation, and referring now to FIGS. **4**A and **4**B, a one-line game is shown in a first state (FIG. **4**A) and a second state (FIG. **4**B). In the first state as depicted in FIG. **4**A, one payline **34** has been selected and one special "7" symbol **31** has appeared on the center of that payline **34**. This has resulted in the activation of special symbol **31** in the one-line matrix **30** above the reels **28**. The remaining special "7" symbols **31** on the payline **34** on the matrix **30** remain grayed out as they have not yet appeared on the corresponding reel **28** positions for one-line players.

At some later time, perhaps the next spin of the reels or some many spins later, the state depicted in FIG. **4**B occurs. It should be noted that intervening spins may have resulted in special symbols **31** landing on the center line **34** but during non-one-line games, thus not resulting in activation on the one-line matrix **30**. In this particular spin, however, the player elected to play one-line **34** and a special "7" symbol **31** appeared on payline **34** on the right reel **28**. This results in the corresponding special "7" symbol **31** being activated in the right center element of the matrix **30** as shown. As noted above, and as shown in this example as well, a special symbol **31** also appeared in the top right position of the left reel, however, this resulted in no special "7" symbol activation on the one-line matrix (or any other matrix) because that special symbol is not on the selected payline.

In another example, and referring now to FIG. **5**A and FIG. **5**B, a three-line first game state (FIG. **5**A) and second game state (FIG. **5**B) are shown. In this example, three paylines **34**, **36**, and **38** have been selected and two special "7" symbols **31** appeared on payline **36** and one on payline **34**. The corresponding special symbols **31** were activated on the matrix **30** as shown in FIG. **5**A. Thereafter, on some later spin of reels **28** the outcome shown in FIG. **5**B occurred. As shown in FIG. **5**B, three (lemons) symbols **29** occurred on payline **34** resulting in a standard winning outcome which is paid according to the paytable. Also, special "7" symbols **31** appeared on paylines **36** and **38**. Corresponding cells in matrix **30** for the three-line game were thus activated. Since all three special symbols **31** were activated on payline **36** another winning outcome occurred for the player resulting in a second award. Thereafter, those three special symbols would be deactivated or grayed out, however, the other activated special symbols in lines **34** and **38** of matrix **30** would remain activated.

In yet another example, and referring now to FIG. **6**A and FIG. **6**B, a five-line first game state (FIG. **6**A) and a five-line second game state (FIG. **6**B) are shown. In this example the player has elected to play five paylines **34**, **36**, **38**, **40**, and **42**. In the first game state the player is awarded for a winning event on payline **36** (three cherries in a row) and two special symbols **31** are activated in corresponding reel to cell locations on matrix **30**. Thereafter, after some future spin of the reels in a five-line game selection, the result shown in FIG. **6**B occurred. Due to the special symbols **31** appearing on reels **28** activation of corresponding special symbols occurred in matrix **30** resulting in a winning outcome along payline **40**. It should be noted that although three activated special "7" symbols are shown in the bottom left cell, the middle cell, and the bottom right cell of matrix **30**, this does not result in a winning outcome for the five-line game as it would in a seven-line game.

In a final example, and referring now to FIG. **7**A and FIG. **7**B a first seven-line game state (FIG. **7**A) and a second seven-line game state (FIG. **7**B) are shown. In this example, a player has elected to play seven paylines **34**, **36**, **38**, **40**, **42**, **44**, and **46**. In the first game state depicted in FIG. **7**A the reels **28** stopped resulting in a winning outcome on payline **42** (three watermelons) and a special symbol **31** was acti-

vated on the matrix **30** in the bottom middle cell. Thereafter, due to another spin of the reels **28**, the results shown in FIG. **7**B occurred. Two winning outcomes are noted on the reels **28**. First, three "7" symbols aligned on payline **42** resulting in a winning outcome. Also, three "7" symbols aligned on payline **46** resulting in another winning outcome. Then, due to those same "7" symbols, activation occurred in matrix **30** in like cell positions resulting in three more winning outcomes. First, a win occurred along payline **42** on matrix **30**. Then another win occurred along payline **38** on matrix **30**. Then, yet another win occurred along payline **46** on matrix **30**.

The overall methodology **110** of the preferred embodiment of the game is shown in the flowchart at FIG. **8**. As shown, the game is started at box **112** and a player selects paylines at box **114**. Those paylines may be purchased with previously purchased credits or money or the game may be played merely for fun with free credits. Thereafter, at box **116**, the reels spin (either automatically due to maximum credits being played or by the player depressing an appropriate spin activation button or touch field) and then come to a stop.

First, a determination is made as to whether a winning event has occurred due to the alignment of symbols on the selected paylines on the reels **28** as shown at decision diamond **118**. If such a winning outcome has occurred on the reels **28** the player is paid or credited according to the game paytable as shown at box **120**.

Then, whether a win occurred on the reels **28** or not, a determination is made as to whether any special symbol **31** landed on any of the selected paylines as shown at decision diamond **122**. If no special symbols **31** landed on selected paylines, then the process starts over at box **112**. On the other hand, if a special symbol **31** did appear on the reels **28** on a selected payline, then the matrix **30** replicates or activates the corresponding symbol position or positions as shown in box **124**.

Next, a determination is made as to whether the newly activated symbols have caused a winning event to occur in the matrix **30** as shown at decision diamond **126**. If no winning outcome is found on matrix **30**, then the process starts over at box **112**. On the other hand, if a winning outcome has occurred in matrix **30** then a determination is made as to whether the progressive jackpot should be paid due to the player having played the maximum amount on the maximum number of paylines as shown at decision diamond **128**. If the player meets the progressive guidelines, the player is paid whatever amount the progressive jackpot is currently at and the winning symbols on matrix **30** are deactivated as shown at box **130** and the process starts over at box **112**. Otherwise, the player is paid according to the matrix paytable and the winning symbols on matrix **30** are deactivated as shown at box **132** and the process starts over at box **112**.

In an alternate embodiment of the invention **210**, and referring now to FIG. **9**, a similar slot machine is shown. The slot machine again includes a cabinet **212**, a video display **214**, buttons **216**, credit meter **218**, coin slot **220**, bill validator **222**, card reader **224**, and payout bin **226** not unlike those described in FIG. **1** above.

Referring now also to FIG. **10**, reels **228** are depicted on the video display **214** and five possible paylines **238**, **240**, **242**, **244**, and **246** are shown. In this embodiment, three special symbols **232**, **234**, and **236** are available in addition to standard symbols **230**. Additionally, three matrices **248**, **250**, and **252** are presented—one for each special symbol.

Like the game of the preferred embodiment, when a special symbol appears on the reels on a selected payline, it is activated on a matrix, but in this embodiment, each special symbol has a unique matrix. That is, when the special symbol **232** appears on the reels on a selected payline, it is activated in a corresponding position in matrix **248**. Likewise, when special symbol **234** appears on selected paylines of reels **228**, a corresponding symbol **234** in a corresponding location is activated in matrix **250**. The same correspondence is true for special symbol **234** and matrix **252**.

In this game embodiment, when a matrix is filled with its special symbols a winning outcome occurs. The first matrix **248** provides a first (and lowest) winning outcome when filled. The second matrix **250** provides a second (and middle) winning outcome when filled. The third matrix **252** provides a third (and largest) winning outcome when filled as well as making the player eligible to play an eligibility game to be described in more detail below.

For example, as shown in the presented reel positions, three special symbols **232** have appeared and are likewise activated in matrix **248**. Those special symbols will remain active in matrix **248** until all of the special symbols **232** are activated, at which time a winning outcome will occur and all of the special symbols **232** will be deactivated or grayed out so that the matrix can be filled again. Likewise special symbols **234** as presented on the reels **228** are activated in corresponding locations in matrix **250** and special symbol **236** on reel **228** are activated in a corresponding locating on matrix **252**.

As noted above, the filling of each matrix **248**, **250**, or **252** results in a winning outcome and an award be paid or credited to the player. Additionally, when matrix **252** is filled, not only is a winning outcome determined and an award paid, but the player then also becomes eligible to play another game altogether.

Referring now to FIG. **11** the preferred eligibility game **310** is shown. The game **310** is depicted on video display **312** which may be the same display **214** used for the primary game. The eligibility game **310** includes preferably four cards **314** being presented face down on display **312**. The player must then select two of the four cards either by depressing certain of buttons **216** or touching touch fields (not shown) over the cards **314**. If the selected two cards **314** match, the player wins a first prize **316**. Play continues in like fashion until the player guesses incorrectly three times or the other prizes **318** and **320** have been obtained through correct guesses, whichever comes first.

More particularly, and referring now to FIG. **12**, the first portion of the methodology of the alternate embodiment **410** is show in the flowchart. The game starts at **412** and the player elects which paylines to play at box **414** by paying money or playing existing credits. Thereafter, the reels spin either automatically due to maximum credits being played or due to the player depressing the appropriate spin button as shown in box **416**. Then a determination is made as to whether a winning outcome has occurred on the reels due to symbols aligning on the selected paylines in accordance with the paytable as shown at decision diamond **418**. If a winning outcome or outcomes is found on the reels payment or credit is paid according to the paytable as shown at box **422**.

Next, whether a win occurred on the reels or not, a determination is made as to whether any special symbols have appeared on the selected paylines as shown in decision diamond **420**. If no such special symbols have appeared on

the reels, then the process starts over at **412**. Otherwise, any special symbols appearing on the reels are activated in a corresponding position (reel position to cell position) in the matrix corresponding to the special symbol depicted as shown at box **424**.

Next a determination is made as to whether any of the three matrices have been filled as indicated by decision diamonds **426**, **428**, and **432**. If any have been filled, then a winning outcome is awarded according to the matrix pay-table for each matrix filled and the filled matrices are then cleared or the symbols deactivated as shown at box **430**.

In the even the third or last matrix is filled, the player is then eligible to play the eligibility game **510** as indicated at **434**. Eligibility game **510** starts at **512**. First, counters N and M are set to zero as shown at box **514**. These counters are necessary to determine if the player has used up the available guesses or won the maximum award.

Next, four cards are displayed on the screen and the player is allowed to turn two over as shown in box **516**. Then a determination is made as to whether the two chosen cards match as shown in decision diamond **518**. If the cards do not match, N is incremented by one (one of the players incorrect guesses has been used) as shown at box **520** and a determination is made as to whether all three incorrect guesses have been used as shown at decision diamond **522**. If the player has guesses remaining, the process goes back to box **516** where the player is shown four cards face down again and gets to pick two again. If no guesses are left, the normal reel game is again presented and started as in box **536** and **412**.

On the other hand, if the player chooses two cards that match, M is incremented by one (the player won one of the prizes) as shown in box **524** and a determination is made as to which prize was won as shown at decision diamonds **526** and **530**. Simply put, if the player guesses correctly three times before guessing incorrectly three times, the player wins all three prizes in order as shown in boxes **528**, **532**, and **534**. After winning the third and final prize, the reel game is presented on the display for further play as shown in boxes **536** and **412**.

While embodiments and applications of this invention have been shown and described, it would be apparent to those skilled in the art that many more modifications than mentioned above are possible without departing from the inventive concepts herein. The invention, therefore, is not to be restricted except in the spirit of the appended claims.

What is claimed is:

1. A method for playing a game of chance comprising:

presenting a plurality or reels on a display, each reel configured to present game symbols defining an outcome, at least one symbol for each reel designated as a special symbol;

providing a plurality of pay lines on the display;

the player, for each game of play, enabling a number of a plurality of pay lines by making a wager;

based upon the number of play lines enabled, displaying a matrix of cells corresponding to stop positions on said reels, said matrix display persisting through subsequent game plays until reset;

spinning said reels and stopping said spinning reels to display an outcome of symbols of symbols for each enabled pay line;

determining for each enabled pay line whether said symbol combination is a winning symbol combination compared to predefined winning outcomes;

issuing an award based upon each winning symbol combination;

displaying each special symbol of said outcome in a corresponding cell position of said matrix and determining whether displaying the special symbol in the cell position is a winning special symbol combination compared to predefined winning combinations; and

issuing an award for special symbol winning combinations and resetting the cells of the matrix by removing the special symbols therefrom.

2. The method of claim **1** comprising providing on the matrix a number of pay lines corresponding to the number of pay lines enabled and determining whether displaying the special symbol in the cell position is a winning special symbol combination on a matrix pay line compared to predefined winning combinations.

3. An electronic apparatus for playing a game of chance comprising:

a display;

a computer processor;

a plurality or reels at the display, each reel configured to present an outcome matrix of game symbols, at least one symbol for each reel designated as a special symbol;

means for the player to, for each game play, enable pay lines at the display by making a wager;

said processor configured to (i) display a matrix of cells corresponding to said outcome matrix and (ii) display said matrix of cells persisting through subsequent game plays until reset;

said processor configured to control the display at said display spinning said reels and stopping said spinning reels to display an outcome of symbols for each enabled pay line, determine for each enabled pay line whether said symbol combination is a winning symbol combination compared to predefined winning outcomes and issue an award based upon each winning symbol combination; and

said processor configured to displaying each special symbol from said outcome in a corresponding cell position of said cell matrix, determine whether displaying the special symbol in the cell position is a winning special symbol combination compared to predefined winning combinations, issue an award for special symbol winning combinations and reset the cells of the matrix for the cells of the winning combination by removing the special symbols therefrom.

4. The apparatus of claim **3** comprising said processor configured to display said cell matrix including pay lines corresponding to the enabled pay lines, determine whether displaying the special symbol in the cell position is a winning special symbol combination on any enabled pay line compared to predefined winning pay line combinations, issue an award for special symbol winning pay line combinations and reset the cells of the matrix for the cells of the winning pay line combination by removing the special symbols therefrom.

* * * * *

L Number	Hits	Search Text	DB	Time stamp
6	148641	select$5 near10 area$1	USPAT; US-PGPUB; EPO; JPO	2003/11/05 09:45
7	103	(select$5 near10 area$1) and payline$1	USPAT; US-PGPUB; EPO; JPO	2003/11/05 09:53
9	1220	(additional or second) near10 bonus$4	USPAT; US-PGPUB; EPO; JPO	2003/11/05 09:54
10	108	((additional or second) near10 bonus$4) and (trigger$4 near3 symbol$1)	USPAT; US-PGPUB; EPO; JPO	2003/11/05 09:57
11	63	(((additional or second) near10 bonus$4) and (trigger$4 near3 symbol$1)) and payline$1	USPAT; US-PGPUB; EPO; JPO	2003/11/05 10:16
12	26	(trigger$4 near3 symbol$1) near5 location$1	USPAT; US-PGPUB; EPO; JPO	2003/11/05 10:35
13	76	((trigger$4 or special) near10 symbol$1 near10 payline$1) and bonus$4	USPAT; US-PGPUB; EPO; JPO	2003/11/05 10:36
14	29	(((trigger$4 or special) near10 symbol$1 near10 payline$1) and bonus$4) and (additional near5 bonus$4)	USPAT; US-PGPUB; EPO; JPO	2003/11/05 10:36